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ABSTRACT

This brief income fact sheet presents information on the poverty of elderly Hispanics compiled from Bureau of the Census data. The report notes that Hispanics over 65 are more than twice as likely to be poor as elderly whites. Poverty has increased by 13,000 among Hispanics while decreasing by 102,000 for all older Americans. Approximately one out of four (26.6%) older Hispanics was classified as poor by the Census Bureau; this level is the second highest ever recorded for Hispanics since the Census began tabulating data on this group. Poverty is particularly widespread among older Hispanic women. In 1982, the poverty rate for older Hispanic women (31.4%) was more than twice that of their Anglo counterparts (15.1%). Other elderly Hispanics do not fall into the set criteria for poverty but live so near this line that there is not perceptible difference, making the total number living in poverty 244,000. Moreover, these figures do not fully depict the dimensions of elderly Hispanic poverty. Other factors to be considered are Census undercounting of Hispanics and exclusion of people living with others who are not classified as poor. (CG)

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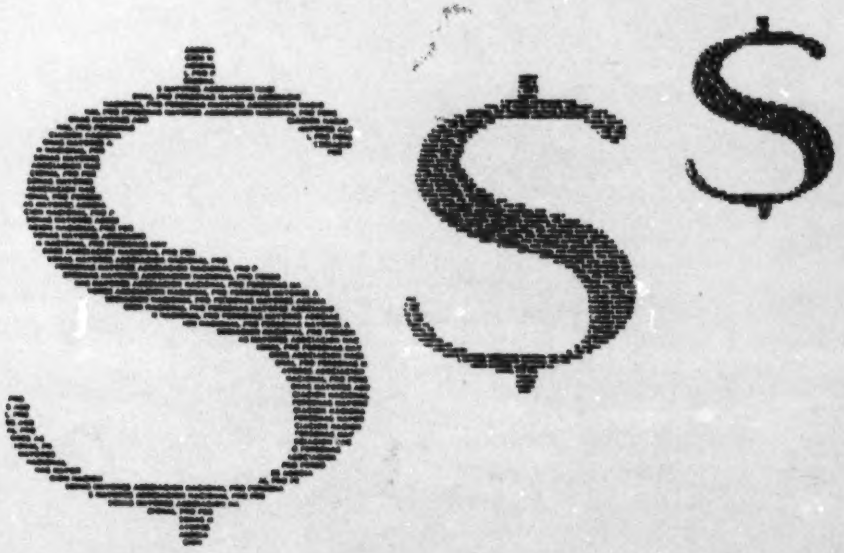
INCOME FACT SHEET ON OLDER HISPANICS



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Inadequate income in retirement continues to be the number one problem confronting older Hispanics. The harsh reality of a retirement income crisis already affects many aged Hispanics and threatens to engulf more. This point was made emphatically in recently released Bureau of the Census data.

Poverty

Hispanics 65 years or older are more than twice as likely to be poor as elderly Whites. Over 26% of all aged Hispanics lived in poverty in 1982, compared to 12.4% for older Anglos.

Poverty increased by 13,000 for Hispanic persons 65 or older in 1982, but declined by 102,000 for all older Americans.

About 159,000 aged Hispanics were classified as poor by the Bureau of the Census -- approximately one out of every four (26.6%) Spanish-origin persons 65 or older.

This level is the second highest ever recorded since the Census Bureau began tabulating poverty data about older Hispanics.

Persons 65 or older were considered poor in 1982 if their annual incomes did not exceed $4,626 ($5,836 for an elderly couple). This translates to $89 per week ($112 for aged couples) to pay for housing, food, health care, transportation, clothing, utilities, and other everyday necessities.

POVERTY RATES FOR PERSONS 65 OR OLDER IN 1982 (POVERTY LEVELS ARE EXPRESSED IN THOUSANDS)

All Races		White		Hispanic	
Poor	Percent Poor	Poor	Percent Poor	Poor	Percent Poor
3,751	14.6	2,870	12.4	159	26.6

Source: Current Population Reports, Series P.60. No. 140, "Money Income and Poverty Status of Families and Persons in the United States 1982," U. S. Dept. of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, p. 21.

Note: Hispanics can be of any race.

Women: Poverty is especially widespread among older Hispanic women. Almost one out of every three aged Hispanic females (31.4%) was poor in 1982. The poverty rate for older Hispanic women was more than twice as great as that for elderly Anglo females: 31.4% compared to 15.1%.

POVERTY RATES FOR WOMEN 65 OR OLDER IN 1982 (POVERTY LEVELS ARE EXPRESSED IN THOUSANDS)

All Races		White		Hispanic	
Poor	Percent Poor	Poor	Percent Poor	Poor	Percent Poor
2,658	17.5	2,080	15.1	110	31.4

Source: Page 25 of report cited above.

Another barometer of the exceptionally high level of economic deprivation among elderly Hispanic women can be obtained from 1982 data about persons in families headed by an aged Hispanic householder with no husband present. In 1982, 41.5% of all persons in these family units were impoverished.

Near Poverty: The poverty figures -- depressing as they may be -- represent only a portion of a grim economic picture for older Hispanics. Another 85,000 aged Hispanics are classified as marginally poor. Their incomes barely exceed the poverty thresholds but not by more than 25%.

The net impact is that 244,000 older Hispanics -- about two out of every five Spanish-origin persons 65 years or older (40.9%) -- either live in poverty or so close to it that they really cannot appreciate the difference.

NEAR-POVERTY THRESHOLDS FOR PERSONS 65 OR OLDER IN 1982

Size of Family Unit	Near-Poverty Threshold (125% of Poverty threshold)
1 person	$5,782
2 persons	$7,295

These figures do not fully depict the dimensions of the retirement income crisis gripping thousands of older Hispanics and threatening to engulf others. Many elderly Hispanics, for example, are not included in the poverty or near-poverty statistics because of the significant undercounting of Hispanics. Additionally, older Hispanics with income below the poverty or near-poverty thresholds are not counted for Census purposes if they live with others with sufficient incomes to boost them above these economic benchmarks.

PERSONS 65 OR OLDER WITH INCOMES BELOW 125% OF THE POVERTY LEVEL IN 1982 (FIGURES ARE EXPRESSED IN THOUSANDS)

All Races		White		Hispanic	
Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
6,106	23.7	4,889	21.0	244	40.9

Source: Page 24 of report cited above.

In families headed by an aged Hispanic householder with no husband present, nearly three out of every five persons (59.3%) in these units are either poor or marginally poor.

Income

Most older Hispanics live on tight budgets because their income is usually low. The median annual income for aged Hispanic males was just $5,257 in 1981. This is less than 125% of the 1982 poverty threshold ($5,782). Aged Hispanic women had a median annual income of $3,496, which is $1,130 below the 1982 poverty line.

Almost three out of four elderly Hispanic women had annual incomes below $5,000 in 1981, and one out of seven had incomes below $2,000 a year. Only about one of 20 aged Hispanic women had annual income of $10,000 or more in 1981.

INCOME IN 1981 OF HISPANIC PERSONS 65 YEARS OR OLDER [1]

Income Bracket	Male	Female
Median	$5,257	$3,496
Less than $2,000	4.6%	14.1%
$2,000 - $2,999	10.7	24.5
$3,000 - $3,999	15.7	23.2
$4,000 - $4,999	16.0	13.0
$5,000 - $5,999	11.9	11.7
$6,000 - $6,999	8.5	4.1
$7,000 - $9,999	15.8	4.4
$10,000 - $14,999	8.8	3.7
$15,000 - $19,999	3.4	0.3
$20,000 - $24,999	2.5	1.2
$25,000+	2.2	0

Note: Figures do not add because of rounding.

[1] Unpublished data, U.S. Dept. of Commerce, Bureau of the Census.